

U.S. Department of Education
2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[X] Public or [] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I [X] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Debra Lach

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name DaVinci Academy of Arts and Science

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 13001 Central Avenue North

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Blaine State MN Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 55434-4150

County Anoka County

Telephone (763) 754-6577

Fax (763) 754-6578

Web site/URL http://www.davincicharterschool.org/ E-mail dlach@davincicharterschool.org

Twitter Handle _____ Facebook Page _____ Google+ _____

YouTube/URL _____ Blog _____ Other Social Media Link _____

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent*Ms Debra Lach

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

E-mail dlach@davincicharterschool.org

District Name DaVinci Academy of Arts and Science Tel. (763) 754-6577

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board

President/Chairperson Mr Ross Meisner

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

Date _____
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Part I – Eligibility Certification

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - 0 Middle/Junior high schools
 - 0 High schools
 - 0 K-12 schools
- 1 TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- ☐ Urban or large central city
 - ☐ Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - ☒ Suburban
 - ☐ Small city or town in a rural area
 - ☐ Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	16	20	36
1	25	27	52
2	29	24	53
3	27	26	53
4	28	24	52
5	27	23	50
6	24	24	48
7	19	29	48
8	20	21	41
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
Total Students	215	218	433

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 3 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 14 % Asian
 - 9 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 70 % White
 - 0 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 2%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	2
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	7
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	9
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	433
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.021
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	2

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 2 %
8 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):

Amharic, Arabic, Hindi, Spanish

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 18 %
Total number students who qualify: 77
8. Students receiving special education services: 12 %
52 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

<u>16</u> Autism	<u>1</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>6</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>9</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>3</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>16</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>2</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>4</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>2</u> Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 4

10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	4
Classroom teachers	30
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	9
Paraprofessionals	11
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	3

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 14:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	97%	96%	96%	95%	96%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No X

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

DaVinci Academy of Arts and Science will awaken a passion for learning through an enriched and individualized approach to education. Students, parents and teachers will work together to ensure positive character development and build a strong foundation for higher education. We will be known and respected for providing a dynamic education experience in which students become lifelong learners with a sense of responsibility to society.

16. For public schools only, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

As a public charter school, admission to DaVinci Academy is open to all students, without regard to ability, race, religion, or any other factors, other than the capacity of the program, class, grade level, or building. All applications received during the open enrollment period are automatically accepted for enrollment unless more applications are received than the available enrollment established by the Board for the applicable grade(s). In this situation, all submitted applications for such grade(s) are placed in the lottery; however, siblings of currently admitted students (first) and children of staff employed in school (second) have preference, as specified in the Minnesota charter statute.

PART III – SUMMARY

DaVinci Academy of Arts and Science (DVA) is a successful K-8 public charter school in its 8th year of operation. Designated as a Reward School by the Minnesota Department of Education for all 5 years the designation has been available, DaVinci Academy is one of only 4 charter schools in the state to achieve this recognition. This award is based on the proficiency and growth of students in math and science, as well as the fact that our school is closing the achievement gap for our students.

DVA began like many other charter schools – by a parent who was looking for a different way for her student to learn. Founded in 2008, the initial board researched differentiated education and knew that many children would benefit from an individualized approach to teaching and learning. Because there are many regional and international technology firms nearby, it seemed logical to give science and technology priority. And much like Leonardo DaVinci himself, the board realized that the arts are also a priority for well-rounded, creative learners.

The school launched with 163 students in K-6 and quickly grew. Today, we serve approximately 433 K-8 students from 27 zip codes. Our student body is more diverse than neighboring schools and we are helping to close the achievement gap in Minnesota. In 2015, for example, the weighted percentage of subgroups meeting their proficiency targets in math and reading was 100%.

We are dedicated to free, quality education for all students and we provide the following key strategies: evidence-based curricula; strong Response to Intervention, Title 1, EL (English Learners), Gifted and Talented (GT) and other interventions; Differentiated Education; and Data Driven Instruction (DDI). These programs contribute to the success of all students.

DaVinci Academy has four pillars that provide focus and direction to achieving our mission: A Focus on Arts and Science, Enhanced Learning Experiences, Differentiated Instruction, and Character Development.

Our first pillar is a Focus on Arts and Science. Research points to a strong relationship between learning in the arts and the fundamental cognitive skills and capabilities used to master core subjects including reading, writing and math. All DVA students receive instruction in art and music from licensed teachers starting in kindergarten. We have 5 bands, 3 orchestras, and 3 choirs and all students are required to choose a “performance” based music class in 5th grade, as we believe that performance in the arts is an important learning experience and skill.

We maintain a strong focus on science from Kindergarten through 8th grade, as evidenced by strong performance on the Minnesota science assessments. We integrate this science focus into other areas as much as possible, and students have a broad base of science knowledge through a variety of curricula. All students in K-8 participate in an annual science and/or inventor's fair that teaches them about scientific and engineering processes.

Our students also participate in a variety of Enhanced Learning Experiences, which is our second pillar. We schedule new “Intersessions” annually - intensive week-long courses that have a focus on arts and/or science. Topics have included physics, engineering, sculpture, astronomy, theater, and environmental studies. These experiential courses give students an appreciation of how the knowledge and skills they master in class translate to life and careers.

Our third pillar of Differentiated Instruction has always been a priority. We believe that all students are capable of learning and we strive to meet the unique learning needs of every student, no matter where the student falls on the academic spectrum. We are committed to data-driven instruction (DDI) as a means to assess and evaluate student progress toward local, state, national, and college and career readiness standards, and to inform instruction. DDI allows the teacher to map out a teaching plan based on students’ and classes’ individual strengths and weaknesses.

We are a PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) school and focus on Character Development

as our fourth pillar. The key features of our PBIS program include: proactive approaches to teaching and improving social behaviors; data-based decision making; and a prevention focused continuum of support. Through our character development program we have seen a sharp increase in recognitions for positive behaviors and a sharp decline in discipline referrals and suspensions.

DaVinci Academy is a Q-comp (merit-pay) school and we have a robust teacher observation/ feedback/ evaluation process. The goals are to: articulate expectations; assess performance in instructional domains; provide support for the development of high performing teachers capable of delivering outstanding education; and ultimately, to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

We have a modified “year-round” school calendar and students have a shortened summer break of approximately 6 weeks. We have seen that students retain more over the shortened summer and this reduces the time necessary for re-teaching in the fall. We take more frequent short breaks during the school year, which helps keep both students and teachers from burning out during the year. Breaks also provide teachers and administrators time to review data, refresh lesson plans based on that data, and prepare for the next unit of instruction.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

Our academic curriculum is based on the Core Knowledge (CK) Sequence, an education model that clearly defines the knowledge and skills required to succeed in each successive grade. The Core Knowledge Sequence is based on the premise that a grade-by-grade core of common learning is necessary to ensure a sound and equitable education for all students. Our Arts and Science Focus, one of the four pillars of learning noted above, is combined with the CK curriculum, which also has a strong focus on the arts, to ensure that students receive a holistic education.

Inherent in the CK Sequence is the understanding that knowledge builds upon knowledge. Students receive a solid foundation in all subjects in the younger grades, and then enhance that knowledge in subsequent years by building on what they already know. We work to align the CK and other curriculum areas with the Minnesota State Standards as well as the Common Core Standards to ensure students have no gaps in their learning.

In grades K – 5, we have implemented the Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum. Our elementary reading and Language Arts curriculum is based on decades of cognitive science research showing that reading requires two key "strands" of focus in order for students achieve proficiency. The first strand teaches decoding skills. The second key strand is the listening and learning strand, which concentrates on oral language, vocabulary, and building background knowledge sufficient to comprehend what is decoded. Together, these two strands unlock a lifetime of reading for all children. Students in grades 6-8 use a reader's/writer's workshop model based on the Core Knowledge Sequence as well as the Common Core Standards.

Singapore Math is used in Grades K – 5 and in grades 6 – 8 students transition to the Holt Mathematics program. Our elementary math curriculum focuses on developing in-depth understanding of essential math skills through concept building activities, mental math strategies, problem solving methods, and a focus on mastery. Teachers use flexible grouping in order to work closely with students according to their current levels of performance and understanding. Math concepts are first presented in a concrete manner and when the students have a strong grasp on the concrete, the material is then represented in abstract, mathematical form. The middle school Holt Mathematics program provides an easy transition to high school math courses and is closely aligned with the Minnesota State Standards. Many of our students choose to participate in the challenging Continental Math League competition, and in 2015 our third grade team tied for first place nationally.

Science and Social Studies follow the Core Knowledge Sequence as well as Minnesota State Standards. All students in grades K – 8 have Science and Social Studies every day. Hands-on projects and experiments, as well as extended learning projects, make up a large portion of both subjects. An example of this is in first grade, when students learn about Ancient Egypt and then have their own bartering fair where they exchange art works they have created, representing Ancient Egypt, with their parents and the community. In Social Studies, topics range from Ancient Civilizations through the modern world and include geography units. Science in grades K – 5 covers all three main areas: Life Science, Physical Science and Earth and Space Science. In middle school, each year focuses exclusively on one particular area of science. We use a variety of science curricular materials from FOSS, Holt and the William and Mary Curriculum for Gifted Students. All students in K – 8 are involved in a Science or Inventor's Fair each year.

In order to ensure that students are meeting standards, we use data-driven assessments at least three times per year. In K – 3, this includes the use of the STEP Literacy Assessment which is a comprehensive assessment tool. This assessment provides teachers with information about comprehension, fluency, decoding, inference, and spelling as well as other necessary skills. As with all other data-driven assessments, this information is used by teachers to create student groupings and to determine which students need more assistance and which students might need more challenge.

Other data-driven assessments include AIMSweb reading and math assessments, teacher-created comprehensive assessments in reading, math and science, practice MCAIII (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment) and the NWEA Map assessment. After each assessment, meetings are held with the teacher and Academic Director to determine a course of action for each student or group of students. For students needing more assistance, we utilize RTI (Response to Intervention) and either have an RTI teacher go into the classroom to provide extra support or pull out a small group of students to review topics on which they may be struggling. If it is determined that a student needs to be challenged in a particular subject, the teacher may consult the GT/Advanced Academics teacher to determine what type of extensions may be appropriate. Some students, particularly in middle school, may undertake a dual curriculum. For example, many of the students in eighth grade are taking Algebra and Geometry concurrently.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Arts: Given that DaVinci Academy is an arts and science school, all students have significant access to many types of art. We employ two full-time art teachers so all students have art class with a licensed teacher at least once every third day. Teachers also incorporate art into all subject areas. The art curriculum often aligns with topics students are studying in the Core Knowledge Sequence, and students learn to work in a variety of media, such as acrylic, pastels, charcoal and clay to name a few. We have three art shows every school year so all students have work that is showcased. Advanced art courses are offered at different grade levels and many 8th grade graduating students create an art project to leave as a legacy gift to the school.

The music program at DaVinci Academy continues to grow each year. We employ a full-time instrumental music instructor as well as a full-time vocal music teacher. Students in grades K – 4 attend music classes every third day and are introduced to general musical concepts, techniques and instruments. In an effort to help each student achieve a balanced, well-rounded education, we believe that performance in the arts is an important learning experience and skill, and in grade 5 students must choose a performance art – band, orchestra or choir. In middle school, students may choose to continue with the performance art or take general music; approximately 90% of the students choose to continue with performance. Presently, the instrumental music program consists of a fifth grade band, sixth grade band, advanced band, jazz band, wind ensemble, beginning orchestra, advanced orchestra, and chamber orchestra. The vocal music program consists of a fifth grade choir, middle school choir and chamber choir. A number of the music ensembles have begun to play in various competitions and exhibitions in order to further their performance skills.

We have an extra-curricular theater program and students also perform regularly in classrooms in reader's theater, poetry recitations, literature adapted into drama, and other opportunities at each grade level. Middle school students put on a play for the community in the fall and a musical in the spring. In the fall of 2015, students in grades 2 – 5 were able to participate in the musical *Treasure Island*. In the spring, students also put together a talent show to present to the wider community.

Physical Education: Physical Education at DaVinci Academy aligns with the National Association for Sport and Physical Education Standards. All students have physical education classes at least once every third day. Participation, sportsmanship, skills, character education and safety are all areas that are emphasized. Students participate in physical fitness testing in the spring of each school year. Health and nutrition curriculum is taught in the homeroom classes, in P.E., in science classrooms, and by school counselors, depending on the age/grade level of students. We also have strong extracurricular sports participation. This year for instance we had 10 basketball teams, representing 2nd through 8th graders, coached by teachers, parents, and community members.

Foreign Language: Spanish language is introduced to the students starting in fourth grade, with instruction every other day. For the first two years of Spanish language instruction (grades 4 and 5), fundamentals are covered. In sixth grade, students are able to choose to add an elective in Spanish and move into more advanced levels in which they are reading and writing in Spanish. The majority of our students enter high school ready for Spanish II and are able to skip Spanish I.

Technology: Various forms of technology are used throughout the grades at DaVinci Academy to teach

technology skills and as tools to help teach or support other subjects. Students in grades K – 3 have access to iPads and desktop computers. These are utilized during Daily Five (small group) stations in both reading and math. Students in grades 4 – 5 have laptop carts in their classrooms and these are also used during station time as well as for research. Middle school students are each issued a Chromebook which is used in every class. DaVinci Academy also has a computer lab with desktop computers. Whole class technology instruction as well as standardized testing take place in the lab.

Engineering: We promote engineering and science through our annual Inventor's Fair, and for the first time in 2016, through the Minnesota Zoo's ZooMS challenge. The ZooMS design challenge offers 4th and 8th grade students a chance to develop a solution to a problem faced by the Minnesota Zoo. Designing an enrichment program for a certain species or building a model of a renovated animal exhibit, the program challenges students to use their engineering, science and math knowledge, creativity, problem solving, and research skills in order to best solve the problem and present a solution. In our first year of participation over 1,900 Minnesota students participated and our 4th grade team was awarded First Place out of the 41 teams that were chosen to showcase their projects at the zoo. Two of our 8th grade teams were chosen for the showcase and out of the 36 projects presented, our two teams were awarded First and Second Place based on their research, exhibit, presentation, and their ability to answer questions about the project.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Every approach at DaVinci Academy that is used to meet the needs of individual learners is based on one most important factor – getting to know each child. This is something that we, as a school, work very hard to achieve. We have at least two to three types of meetings with various staff members, students, parents, and consultants each week in order to ensure that no child is falling through the cracks – socially, emotionally or academically.

All of the teachers differentiate their instruction in order to make sure all students are able to meet learning outcomes. Examples of this include math and reading stations that have students work at varying levels according to their current needs; adding Response to Intervention (RTI) support in the classroom or a pull-out for small groups of students; offering extra classes after school for students who are struggling; putting into place organizational classes or checkpoints throughout the school day for students who need extra support staying organized; using websites that vary the reading level of materials based on data derived from the program and engaging the GT/Advanced Academics teacher, or teachers from higher grade levels, for more challenging material as is deemed necessary. We focus on growth for all students, including those who are achieving at or above grade level. Flexible grouping is used throughout the school year so that students are able to receive more or less assistance as the situation warrants.

A great deal of time is spent on staff development throughout the year to ensure that our teachers fully understand how to differentiate instruction in the classroom. When we talk about differentiation, we are not only differentiating instruction, but also the methods by which the students are allowed to show mastery. For example, some students may take a multiple choice test and others may give a speech at the end of a unit to demonstrate what they have learned.

Classroom environments are also a method of differentiation. Some students have difficulty sitting in one place for long periods of time, so we have a variety of standing desks, stability balls, rocking stools, cushions or traditional desks. Teachers are encouraged to have all students move, often to music, at least once every twenty minutes, which helps many students maintain focus throughout the day.

Our professional development programming also includes training for all teachers and staff on developing a "growth" mindset - the idea that we can grow our brain's capacity to learn and to solve problems. This mindset allows both teachers and students to be creative, make and learn from mistakes, and believe that they can and will grow and learn. We also focus on teaching students executive functioning skills - those skills that help students learn new information, remember and retrieve information, and organize and use this information to solve problems of everyday life. A student's executive functioning skills make it possible to learn with an appropriate level of independence and competence for his or her developmental age.

Communication among staff and parents is also important. If there is a problem or situation at home that will affect the student at school, we are alerted to that fact and therefore can provide appropriate support to the student. It is essential that students feel safe at school in order to perform at their best and we are proud of the safe environment we are able to offer students.

4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

As stated above, we do not have an achievement gap for any subgroup, and we believe that assessment data allows for differentiated instruction that helps us meet the needs of all students. In all core academic subjects, DaVinci Academy uses data-driven assessments internally to monitor learning and student performance. Pre-tests are given prior to each unit and summative assessments three times per school year. Immediately after testing, the assessment results are reviewed by the teacher and Academic Director. An action plan is discussed to re-teach components as necessary to ensure mastery of the material by all students.

DaVinci Academy also administers the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (NWEA MAP) math and reading assessments to students in grades 2 – 8 each fall. The grade level teams then review these results with the Academic Director to determine the scope, sequence and pacing of units of instruction for the year. The STEP Literacy Assessment is conducted in grades K – 3 three times per year as well as AIMSweb in grades 1 – 8. These test results assist teachers with differentiation and ensure that the curriculum is aligned with the state standards to prepare all students for success on state assessments. We have talented and dedicated staff focused on meeting the needs of all students no matter where they fall on the spectrum of achievement to insure growth for all students.

The school's authorizer, Friends of Education (FOE), monitors DaVinci Academy's assessment results on the basis of academic performance, Adequate Yearly Progress, absolute proficiency, comparative proficiency, growth, and success at closing any achievement gap. These assessments are a large part of DVA's annual goals set forth by FOE and the results of all data-driven assessments are shared with our authorizer and the school board during the course of the school year.

Parents can monitor their child's progress through a parent portal on PowerSchool, the student information system used by DaVinci Academy. Parents can see cumulative grades and individual grades on assignments, as well as any missing work. The school provides all students with a planner, designed by the grade teams to meet the specific needs of their students, that goes home each night and is signed by both teacher and parent. This provides for another level of communication between school and home. In the lower grades, students have "Friday Folders" in which they take home all of their work for the week. Formal parent conferences are held twice during the school year, but parents are encouraged to come and talk to teachers at any time. Grade reports are mailed to parents at the end of each trimester. Parents also receive the results for the MCAIII, NWEA, and other assessments.

PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS

1. School Climate/Culture:

We were recently visited by the Minnesota Commissioner of Education. When she asked students, parents, teachers or staff what made DaVinci Academy so successful, the initial response was frequently, “We are like a family.” We strive to know the needs of each child and provide individual supports to ignite a passion for learning one child at a time.

We have a number of settings in which we discuss not only data, but anything that might impact student learning. We have weekly Pre-Referral Team (PRT) meetings in which we design interventions for students who exhibit needs. Teachers also look at student performance in their weekly PLC’s (Professional Learning Communities). We have a Student Support Team (SST), including staff from all areas of the school, that meets weekly during the first few months of each school year and regularly throughout the year. The SST invites teachers to discuss academic, social, emotional, physical, family and other student concerns or needs as they arise. The team then works together to design supports and interventions for that student and/or family. We are dedicated to the idea that we educate and support the whole child.

Character Development is a critical part of our curriculum and supports academic achievement. We have a Student Development Coordinator who works with the PBIS team and all teachers to insure that students are given direct instruction on specific character traits and behavior expectations. We use a “SPARK” model to teach students what Success, Positive Attitude, Responsibility, and Kindness look like in every setting from the classroom to the playground. Through the PBIS model, teachers create an environment where children thrive academically, socially and emotionally. Character education is emphasized school wide, not simply as an isolated curriculum, but as a way of living and being. When we take students on field trips, to tournaments, to museums, plays or concerts (a regular part of our Enhanced Learning model) adults seek us out to tell us how well behaved, respectful and kind our students are.

Our enrichment and remediation services insure that all students can achieve challenging academic achievement standards. We implement robust RTI, Gifted and Talented, tutoring, EL, Title I, Title II, Special Education, and other enrichment and remediation services as necessary. DVA recognizes, teaches and supports a “growth and achievement” model that states that all students can be successful and we seek to challenge each individual to the best of his or her abilities.

Although, as a charter school, we may not always be able to match the salaries of traditional districts for our staff, we work hard to make sure that our teachers feel recognized, valued and supported. For example, at key points during the year, such as just before winter break, the administration team takes over lunch and recess duties so the teaching staff can enjoy a catered meal together. We have “shout outs” at every weekly staff meeting where staff members can recognize each other for great ideas, support of teammates, or other behaviors. We require a minimum of two teachers on the school board and many teachers also actively serve on or attend monthly committee meetings. On the most recent survey 99% of respondents said they “would recommend employment at DaVinci Academy to a friend or colleague,” and 100% said that “DVA is a welcoming place for staff, parents and community” and that “I am proud of our school.”

2. Engaging Families and Community:

DaVinci Academy of Arts and Science was originally created and implemented by a parent, and family involvement has remained consistently high throughout the life of the school. Parent satisfaction surveys are conducted annually to solicit feedback on overall school satisfaction, educational experience, school environment, safety, etc. The board and the administration use survey results in strategic planning, day-to-day operations and communications.

In 2013, the highest scores on the parent survey were “My child likes coming to school at DaVinci Academy” and “I would recommend DaVinci Academy to another family for the education of their child”. The lowest score, at 77.9%, was on “The differentiated instruction approach is helping my child succeed in

his/her learning process.” This result told us that parents needed additional information and understanding of our differentiated approach. In 2014, after dissemination of information regarding differentiation, 86.5% of respondents responded positively to the question. This is one example of how we use the survey results to plan and communicate improvements to the community.

In the recent survey we had responses from 253 DaVinci Academy families representing 412 students. 99% of respondents agreed that “I am satisfied with the education my child is receiving at DaVinci Academy.” 95% agreed that their child enjoys coming to school at DaVinci, and that “the education their child receives at DaVinci Academy will help him/her be successful”.

We welcome parents at the school at any time and we have a very strong parent volunteer program. Our part-time Volunteer Coordinator designs meaningful opportunities for parents such as reading to students individually, helping them create books to capture their own stories, or being read to by students at all levels.

As a charter school, we require a minimum of two parents on our school board to represent and engage this group of stakeholders. We have open board meetings monthly. Additionally, many parents serve on or attend our monthly committee meetings. Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is very active and meets monthly. The PTO organizes family events, raises funds for the school, provides dinners and snacks for teachers during parent/teacher conferences, and supports informational speakers for parents throughout the year.

One of the pillars of our school is to offer enhanced learning experiences, and parents and community members are often invited to participate, to be judges, or to be audience members for such experiences. For example, we have annual Science and Inventor's Fairs to which parents and families are invited as students display and discuss their experiments and inventions. Community members who work in the sciences serve as judges for these competitions and parents often come in to help design, implement, or support such enhanced learning experiences. With our focus on the arts, we have dramatic performances, talent shows, art shows and orchestra, band and choir concerts several times during the year and families and community create standing room only crowds at these events.

3. Professional Development:

DaVinci Academy recruits, develops and strives to retain outstanding teachers. We design and deliver professional development annually on our key curricula, including Core Knowledge and Singapore Math, and on other critical components of our culture such as Differentiated Education, Data-Driven Instruction, PBIS, and other programs. Our charter authorizer regularly provides professional development for the staff of all its network schools through national leaders in education, such as DDI expert Paul Bambrick-Santoyo.

As a charter school, there is no tenure system at DVA, but teachers participate in Q-Comp (Quality Compensation), a Minnesota state merit-pay and professional development program. This is an optional program that must be elected by the majority of the teachers in a school. In 2014-15 the Q-Comp program provided approximately \$125,000 for merit pay, professional development, and stipends for teacher leaders. Teachers can earn merit pay annually based on 1) individual evaluations, 2) a PLC goal, and 3) our school-wide goal, which we revise each year based on data. This year our goal is to increase the number of students who show growth in reading, for example. This school-wide goal informs our professional development for the year and insures that all teachers and staff work together to support growth in reading.

The Q-Comp program also requires career ladder positions for teachers and allows for stipends for PLC team leaders, a Q-Comp Coordinator, and other teacher leaders. Providing these career ladder positions with accompanying professional development is a critical component in retaining and developing our highly successful teaching staff.

Through our Q-Comp program we focus on job embedded professional development. Teachers meet

weekly in Professional Learning Communities and collaborate to share data, design interventions for individuals or groups of students, analyze classroom practice, learn new instructional strategies and tactics, field-test them in the classroom and report the results to each other. All teachers are also provided time and stipends to encourage frequent observations of other teachers, including their PLC team members, other teachers at DVA, and teachers at other schools, thus allowing them to continue learning from successful peers. These observations, followed by discussions of the art and science of the teaching practice, are critical components of our job embedded professional development.

As required by Minnesota statute and the Q-Comp program, we also have a formal teacher evaluation process. Teachers are formally evaluated 2-3 times per year by administrators (depending on length of service), followed by specific feedback sessions. The evaluations and feedback inform the individual professional development plan for the teacher for the following school year.

4. School Leadership:

We have a very lean administrative staff, preferring to spend our limited funds on our high quality teaching staff. The four key administrators include an Executive Director (who serves as Superintendent and Principal), Academic Director, Student Development Coordinator and an Operations Director. All four administrators consistently model the belief that every decision must be filtered through the lens of what is best for the individual student and the student body. In fact, in our annual staff surveys, 100% of staff consistently agree to the survey item “DaVinci Academy is a student centered school.”

Our authorizer, Friends of Education (FOE), was recently rated “Exemplary” in the evaluation conducted by the Minnesota Department of Education. Through our contract with FOE, we have strict guidelines for academic and financial performance that comply with state and national standards. FOE closely monitors student performance, conducts annual evaluative site visits, attends board meetings regularly, and requires comprehensive annual reports. Our most recent contract, renewed after careful evaluation of the previous contract, was renewed for five years, the longest term allowed by Minnesota law.

Our 9-member school board provides oversight and develops the mission and vision of the school. Our governance model requires that we have a minimum of two teachers, two parents and two community members serving on our board at all times, representing the needs of all stakeholders. Board members also chair committees including a Finance, Policy, HR/Compensation, Curriculum/Technology, and School Development committee.

Our Executive Director has extensive knowledge and experience of the DVA community, having previously served as Interim Director at DaVinci, both during its pre-start phases and during the first year of operation. She has education, training and experience in the fields of education, business, non-profit leadership, and finance, which all come together in her work with schools. The Executive Director is passionate about alternative models of education that support academic excellence, interpersonal growth, and success for all students and regularly provides for professional development for staff on models to support academic excellence for all students.. She meets regularly with leaders and teachers at other schools and districts to share ideas, learn about challenges and successes, and make connections between our staff and teachers at other successful schools.

Our Academic Director has been at the school for 7 years and serves a critical role in the success of individual students and the student body as a whole. She has had a wide variety of teaching and leadership experiences including teaching at a boarding school for twice-exceptional students, teaching internationally in both Bahrain and South Africa, and serving as the Director of a charter school on a Native American reservation. Our Academic Director takes pride in knowing the individual strengths and needs of each student at DVA in order to support and challenge each individual to the best of his or her abilities.

Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

As stated above, we strive to know the needs of each child and provide individual supports to ignite a passion for learning one child at a time. We are proud that, in the state with one of the largest achievement gaps in the nation, we are closing the achievement gap for our students. In fact, on her recent visit to DVA, the Commissioner of Education told us that we are one of only a handful of schools in the state that show no statistical difference in proficiency between our black and caucasian students. We believe this is due to all of the factors mentioned throughout this application - but our detailed attention to all data, including information on a student's academic performance, physical, social, emotional, family, and mental health, is a primary factor in the success of our students.

This attention to data is represented by a large magnetic board in the Academic Director's office. This board, which we designed specifically for the purposes described below, holds an individual card for every student in the school. The card contains assessment data and other information about the student, and additionally, next to the name of every student are five squares entitled "Reading", "Math", "Organization", "Social" and "Attendance". Each square has the potential to be filled with a small colored magnet of different colors, with each of 4 colors representing a level of need. The following is a description of how this board is used and how it contributes to and represents our success in supporting each student.

Each week, Pre-Referral Team (PRT) meetings are held to discuss students who are struggling academically or behaviorally. As a team, we determine what interventions to try, whether a parent meeting is in order or if a special education evaluation might be necessary. Through these PRT meetings, data-driven assessments and general discussions with teachers, the reading and math columns are filled with a magnet for students who need immediate intervention (red), students who need to continue to be monitored (orange), students who are currently receiving interventions (yellow) or students who need more challenge (green). In these PRT meetings, as well as in grade-level team meetings, we also discuss which students are struggling with organizational skills or other areas of executive functioning. We then work as a team to decide if a child might need a "check-in/check-out" system to keep track of homework or any of a number of interventions to help with organizational skills, for example, and students may be assigned a color under the Organization column.

Another weekly meeting by the SST (Student Support Team) focuses on the social/emotional needs of the students. Throughout the week, this team is notified by either teachers or parents of situations affecting the emotional health of the students, such as divorce, foreclosure, birth of a new sibling, death of a grandparent, social situations among other students, etc. This team makes sure that supports are put into place for the identified students and families on an as needed basis. This team is also alerted about any attendance or recurring tardies and absences so that they can reach out to parents and help them find solutions to get children to school and on time. The board is then updated for students who are brought to the attention of the SST.

The constant updating of this "student snapshot" board through these meetings, assessment data, interactions with parents, teachers and students, and other means of data gathering, allows for current and complete knowledge of each and every child who attends DaVinci Academy. At a glance, it is very easy to know which students need a little extra attention or intervention. Having this knowledge helps every adult at the school have a more meaningful relationship with the students, creates a safe environment for learning, and ultimately leads to success for all students..